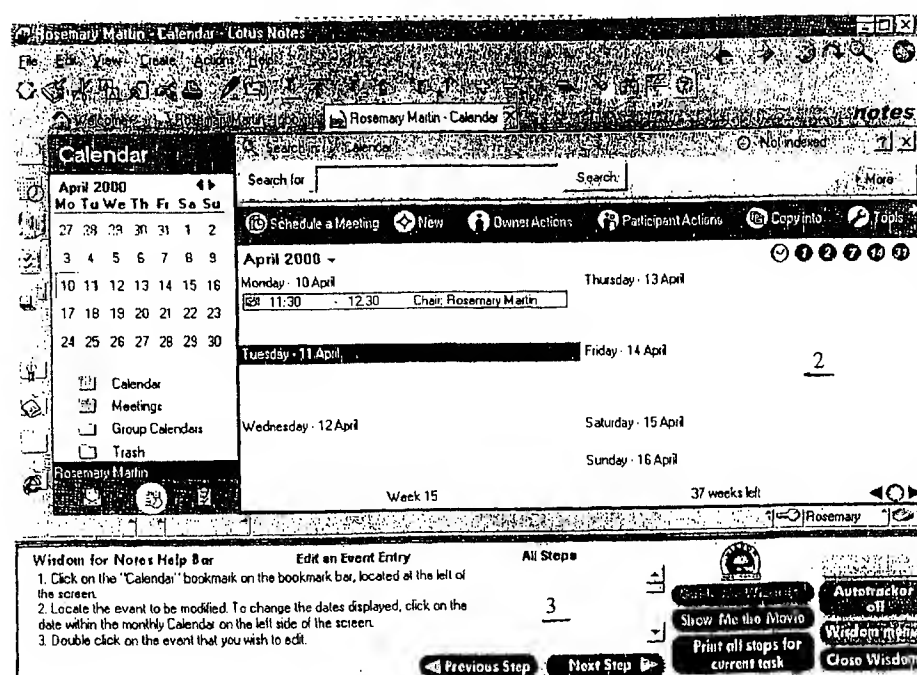




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(54) Title: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR IMPLEMENTING A COMPUTER HELP FUNCTION



(57) Abstract

A method of implementing a help system in a computer. The method includes the steps of identifying the selection, by a user of a help function, and then, adjusting the size, shape, and position of a main window and simultaneously displaying a help window adjacent thereto. The resultant display is preferably of similar size and shape of the original main window.

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SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR IMPLEMENTING A COMPUTER HELP FUNCTION

Technical Field

5 The present invention relates to a help system for a computer having a display screen, and to a method of implementing such a help system. In particular, the present invention relates to a help system and to a method of implementing a help system wherein a help window is provided in a display format simultaneously with the displayed main window, whereby the main window is capable of being viewed by a user. In a preferred arrangement, the help
10 window is positioned below, above, left or right of the main window.

Background of the Invention

Various 'help' systems are known, which are designed to assist users in learning various functions of particular applications. As users of PCs will readily appreciate, in order to use
15 standard help systems, a user is required to discontinue the particular action being undertaken, select the help system, read the various help instructions, and then, remember the instructional information and, after exiting the help system, execute the instructed actions.

This presently known form of help system clearly has significant limitations as it is often
20 difficult for a user to understand, and then recall and execute the help instructions. A user typically selects such help system several times whilst learning how to execute a particular application. A user sometimes prints the textual help information such that it can be referred to multiple times whilst executing the application.

25 Summary of the Invention

The present invention seeks to provide a method of implementing a help system wherein a main application window and a help window may be simultaneously displayed such that a user may continue to execute the main application whilst the help information is simultaneously displayed.

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The present invention also seeks to provide a method of implementing a help system wherein the help information is not limited to providing textual instructional information in a static format.

- 5 In one broad form, the present invention provides a method of implementing a help system in a computer having a display screen, including the steps of:
- detecting user selection of said help system;
 - determining the original display format of the main window corresponding to the particular task for which the help system is selected;
 - 10 adjusting the display format of said main window and simultaneously displaying a help window adjacent thereto,
 - wherein, the resultant display format of said main window and said help window is substantially similar to the original display format of said main window.
- 15 Preferably, said display format includes size, shape and/or position format of a respective window on said display screen.

In a preferred form, said resultant main window is 'compressed' or 'shrunk' in at least one dimension, the dimension of the resultant main window and help window being of

20 substantially similar size to respective dimensions of the original main window.

In an alternative, but also preferred form, said resultant main window display is of similar physical dimension to said original main window, and is provided with a 'scroll bar' for user display of any selection portion of said main window, said help window overlaying a portion

25 of said main window.

Preferably, said help window is displayed on said display screen either below, above, left or right of said main window.

30 Also preferably, said help window provides help information in a step-by-step manner,

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whereby as each task is completed, the next information field is displayed.

In an alternatively preferred form, said help window provides said help information in the form of a 'screencam' movie or wizard tool.

5

In its preferred form, at completion or user deselection of said help system, said main window is readjusted to its original size, shape and position or other display format.

In a further broad form, the present invention provides a help system for a computer having

10 a display screen, including:

means for user selection of said help system;

means for determining the original display format of a main window corresponding to a particular task for which the help system is selected;

means for adjusting the display format of said main window; and,

15 means for simultaneously displaying a help window adjacent to said main window;

characterised in that the resultant display format of said main window and said help window are substantially similar to the original display format of said original main window.

Preferably, said display format includes size, shape and/or position format of a window on

20 said display screen.

Preferably, said main window is adjusted by being 'compressed' or 'shrunk' in at least one dimension, whereby the dimension of the resultant main window and help window is of substantial size to the respective dimension of the original main window.

25

Alternatively, but also preferably, said resultant main window display is of similar physical dimension to said original main window, but is provided with a 'scroll bar' for user display of a selected portion of said main window whilst displaying said help window overlaying a portion of said main window.

30

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Preferably, said help window is displayed on said display screen either below, above, left or right of said main window.

Preferably, said help window provides help information in a step-by-step manner, whereby
5 as each task is completed, the next information field is displayed.

Preferably, said help window provides said help information in the form of a 'screencam' movie or wizard tool.

10 Also preferably, at completion or user deselection of said help system, said main window is readjusted to its original display format.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The present invention will become more fully understood from the following detailed
15 description of a preferred but non-limiting embodiment thereof, described in connection with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

Fig. 1 illustrates the display screen of a computer with the help system implemented, wherein the main window and the help window are simultaneously displayed on the display screen, the help window positioned below the main window;

20 Fig. 2 illustrates, in Figs. 2(a) and 2(b), a first embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 3 illustrates, in Figs. 3(a) and 3(b), an alternative embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 4 illustrates, in Figs. 4(a) and 4(b), various screens showing the ability to select various modules and tasks; and,

Fig. 5 details of the action bar of the help system, and shows details of the various options
25 available.

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Detailed Description of Preferred Embodiment(s)

Throughout the drawings, like numerals will be used to identify similar features, except where expressly otherwise indicated.

5 As shown in Fig. 1, the display screen 1 of the present invention, having the help system implemented in accordance with the present invention comprises two parts. The upper part show a main window 2, and the lower part shows a help window 3, positioned underneath the main window 2, such that both the main window 2 and help window 3 are simultaneously displayed on the display screen of the computer.

10

It will be appreciated that the present invention has significant advantages over various prior art help systems, which typically comprise windows which overlay the main window 2.

As shown in Fig. 1, various help instructions 4 are displayed in the help window 3.

15

Fig. 2 illustrates a schematic representation of an embodiment of the invention, wherein the height dimension of the main window is adjusted in size by being 'compressed' or 'shrunk' in that dimension, such that it is able to be fully viewed by a user, and, a help window is then provided underneath the main window. It will be seen that the overall physical dimensions,
20 i.e. the height and width of the resultant window combination in Fig. 2(b) is substantially the same as the physical dimension of the original main window of Fig. 2(a).

Fig. 3 illustrates a schematic representation of an alternative embodiment of the invention, wherein, instead of the main window being 'compressed' or 'shrunk', a 'scroll bar' 5 is
25 provided such that the entire main window is still viewable by the user. and the help window is provided over the main window. As such, the user is still able to view any part of the main window whilst viewing the help window, to still achieve the advantages of the present invention.

30 It will be appreciated that a user may select between using either the display format of Fig.

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2(b) or Fig. 3(b), or, be provided with the ability to adjust the display format between that of Fig. 2(b) and Fig. 3(b), as desired. This may be facilitated by clicking a 'full screen' or like icon.

5 Typical procedures for implementing the help system in accordance with the present invention, which result in the type of display illustrated in Fig. 1, are shown in Figs. 4(a) to 4(d).

As shown in Figs. 4(a) to 4(d), various tasks can be selected in a variety of conventional
10 manners. The module that the user wishes to utilise may be selected, for example, selecting a e-mail or the like. Then the task which is desired to be used is selected, and once the "show task help" button is selected, the action bar 3, as shown in Fig. 5 will be displayed across the bottom of the screen, in a manner as shown in Fig. 1.

15 Once the help action bar 3 of Fig. 4 is selected, the user may then follow the instructions in the text box. As the user is systematically displayed with the instructional information and performs the task on the main screen 2, the user may click on the "next step" button to display the next step in the task. Once completed, the user may click on the "exit" button, at which time the action bar will disappear from the screen display, and the main window 2
20 will be resized and shaped, such that it again consumes its original size and shape, typically covering the whole of the display screen of the computer.

Various alternative tasks may preferably be included in preferred embodiments of the present invention. For example, a "Guide Me Wizard" option may explain the task, field by field,
25 and as the user completes the task the next set of instructional information is provided in action bar 3. In this function, the user is given an in-depth explanation of each step as it is actually performed.

A "show-me" option is mainly for those who just want a "refresher" on how to do a task.
30 It may typically show a short screencam movie of how to do a task.

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A more "detailed" option may provide the user with additional information about the task. It may typically include short cuts and a glossary of terms associated with the task.

A "print" option is also provided if a user wishes to produce a hard copy of the steps needed
5 for successful task completion.

It will therefore be appreciated that the present invention provides a unique help system for a computer having a display screen and to a method for implementing such a help system, whereby the help window is positioned conveniently below, above, left or right of the
10 simultaneously displayed main window.

A summary of the steps in implementing a preferred embodiment of the invention is provided:

1. Click on the right most smarticon.
- 15 2. This opens the selector screen in the database
3. Select a module by clicking on it.
4. This will display the tasks associated with that module.
5. A task is selected by clicking on the task.
6. This option then passes parameters to the application to be displayed.
- 20 7. Ensure the calling application has passed a value for the tasks/instructions to be loaded.
8. Determine the size of the desktop.
9. Size and position the help interface form and fields.
10. Display the form.
11. Ensure application requiring help is currently loaded (nothing else happens if it is not).
- 25 12. Size and position the application requiring help window above the help interface window.
13. Load the tasks to be displayed.
14. Display the first instruction/task.

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It will be appreciated that numerous variations and modifications may be made to the invention. All such variations and modifications should be considered to fall within the spirit and the scope of the invention as broadly hereinbefore described.

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THE CLAIMS

1. A method of implementing a help system in a computer having a display screen, including the steps of:
 - detecting user selection of said help system;
 - 5 determining the original display format of the main window corresponding to the particular task for which the help system is selected;
 - adjusting the display format of said main window and simultaneously displaying a help window adjacent thereto,
 - wherein, the resultant display format of said main window and said help window is
 - 10 substantially similar to the original display format of said main window.
2. A method of implementing a help system in a computer as claimed in claim 1, wherein said display format includes size, shape and/or position format of a respective window on said display screen.
- 15 3. A method of implementing a help system in a computer as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein said resultant main window is 'compressed' or 'shrunk' in at least one dimension, the dimension of the resultant main window and help window being of substantially similar size to respective dimensions of the original main window.
- 20 4. A method of implementing a help system in a computer as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein said resultant main window display is of similar physical dimension to said original main window, and is provided with a 'scroll bar' for user display of any selection portion of said main window, said help window overlaying a portion of said main window.
- 25 5. A method of implementing a help system as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein said help window is displayed on said display screen either below, above, left or right of said main window.

- 10 -

6. A method of implementing a help system as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein said help window provides help information in a step-by-step manner, whereby as each task is completed, the next information field is displayed.

5 7. A method of implementing a help system as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein said help window provides said help information in the form of a 'screencam' movie or wizard tool.

8. A method of implementing a help system as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 7,
10 wherein, at completion or user deselection of said help system, said main window is readjusted to its original display format.

9. A help system for a computer having a display screen, including:
means for user selection of said help system;
15 means for determining the original display format of a main window corresponding to a particular task for which the help system is selected;
means for adjusting the display format of said main window; and,
means for simultaneously displaying a help window adjacent to said main window;
characterised in that the resultant display format of said main window and said help
20 window are substantially similar to the original display format of said original main window.

10. A help system for a computer having a display screen as claimed in claim 9 wherein said display format includes size, shape and/or position format of a window on said display screen.

25

11. A help system for a computer having a display screen as claimed in claim 9 or 10, wherein said main window is adjusted by being 'compressed' or 'shrunk' in at least one dimension, whereby the dimension of the resultant main window and help window is of substantial size to the respective dimension of the original main window.

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12. A help system for a computer having a display screen as claimed in claim 9 or 10, wherein said resultant main window display is of similar physical dimension to said original main window, but is provided with a 'scroll bar' for user display of a selected portion of said main window whilst displaying said help window overlaying a portion of said main window.

5

13. A help system for a computer having a display screen as claimed in any one of claims 9 to 12, wherein said help window is displayed on said display screen either below, above, left or right of said main window.

10 14. A help system for a computer having a display screen as claimed in any one of claims 9 to 13, wherein said help window provides help information in a step-by-step manner, whereby as each task is completed, the next information field is displayed.

15 15. A help system for a computer having a display screen as claimed in any one of claims 9 to 14, wherein said help window provides said help information in the form of a 'screencam' movie or wizard tool.

16. A help system for a computer having a display screen as claimed in any one of claims 9 to 15, wherein, at completion or user deselection of said help system, said main window
20 is readjusted to its original display format.

17. A method of implementing a help system in a computer, substantially as herein described.

18. A help system for a computer, substantially as herein described with reference to the
25 accompanying drawings.

FIG. 1

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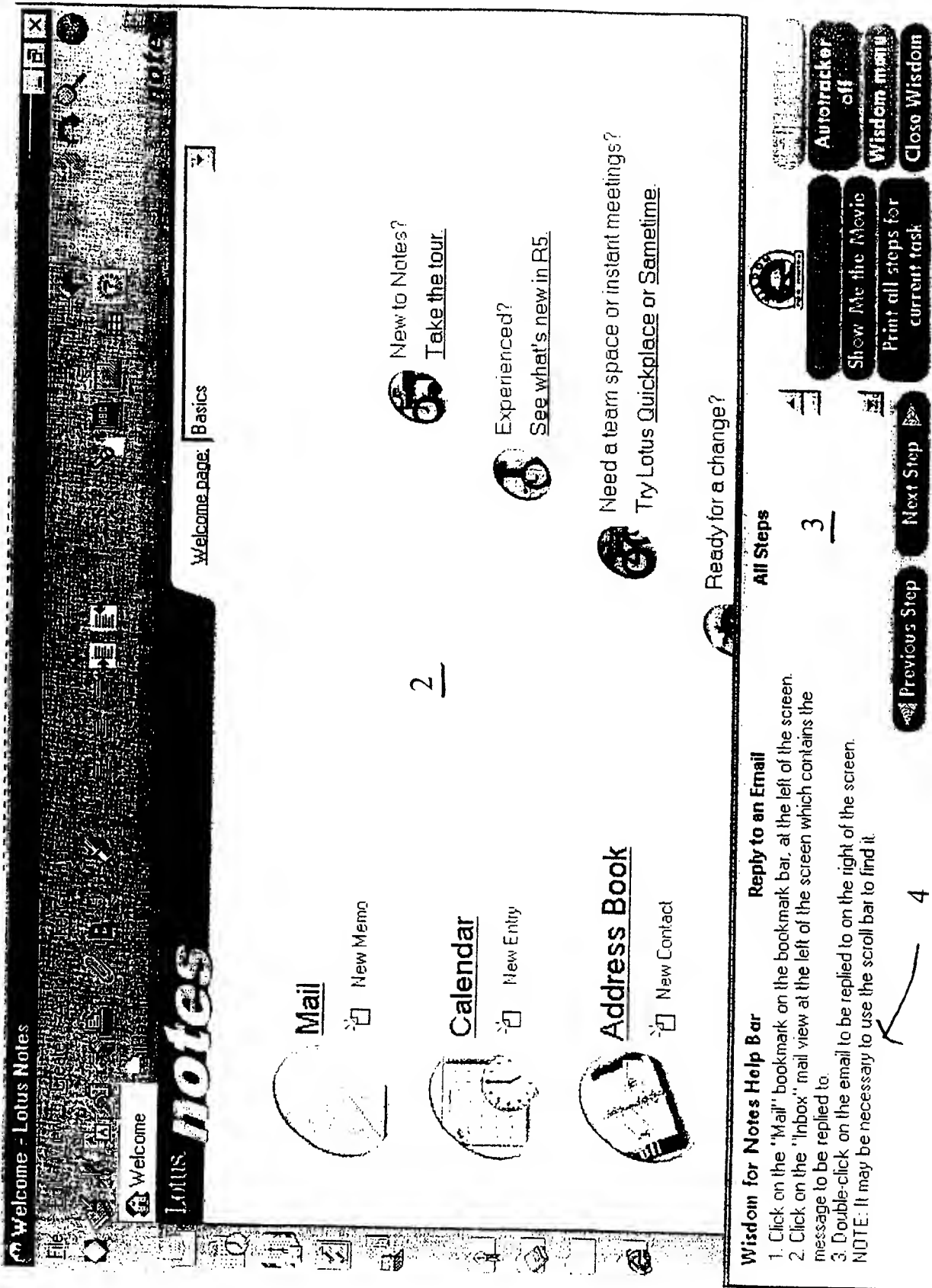


FIG. 2(a)

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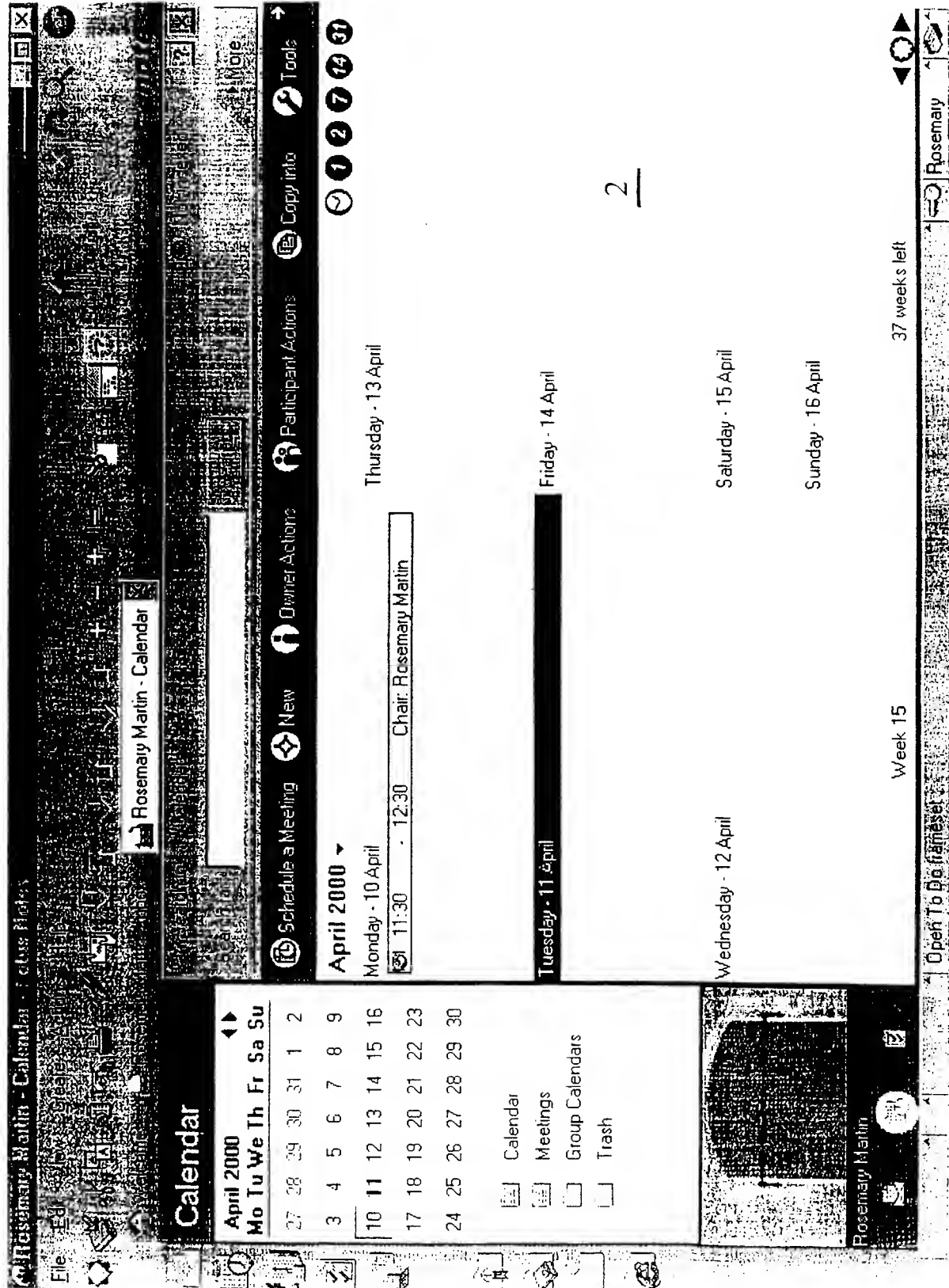


FIG. 2(b)

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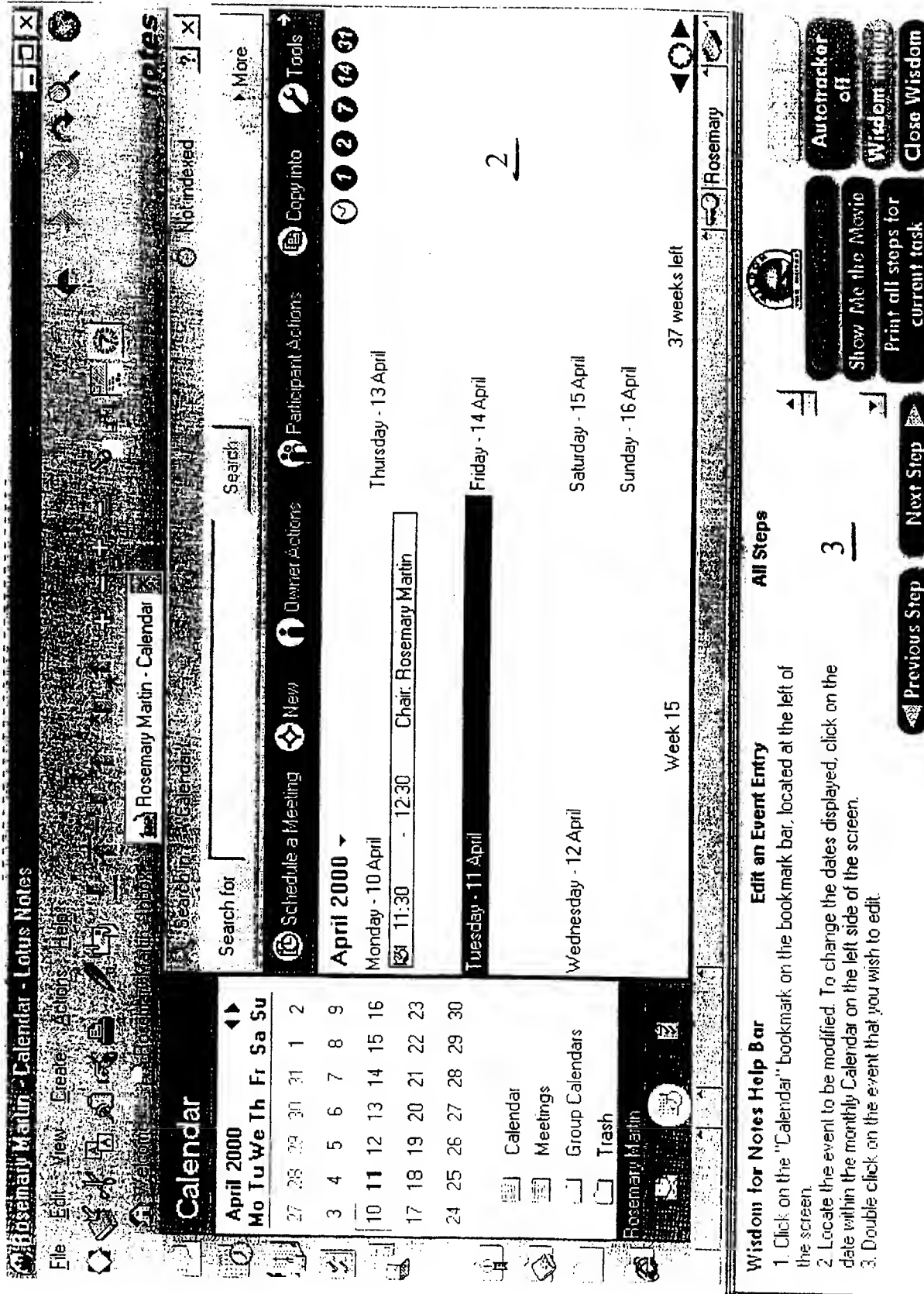
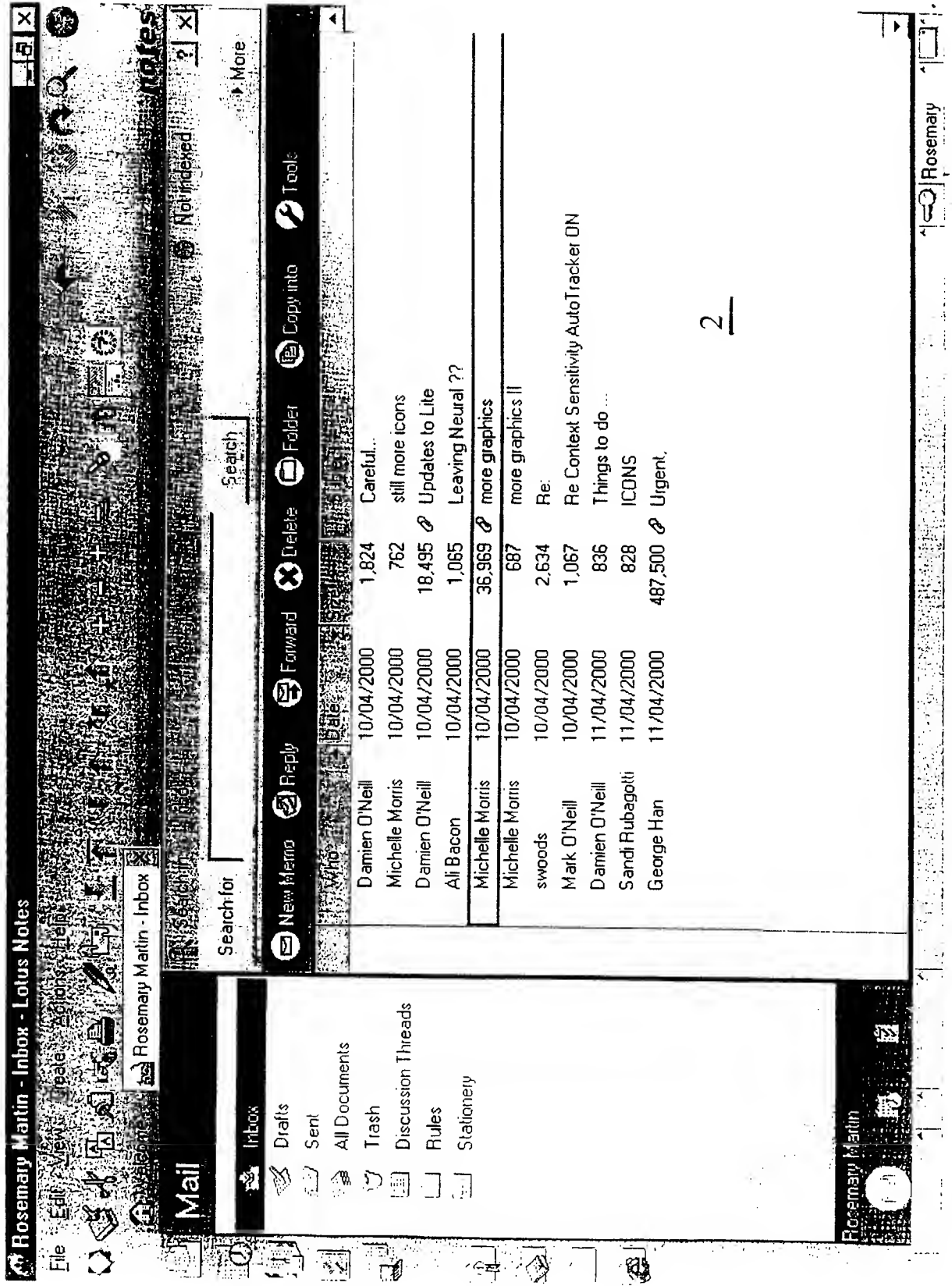


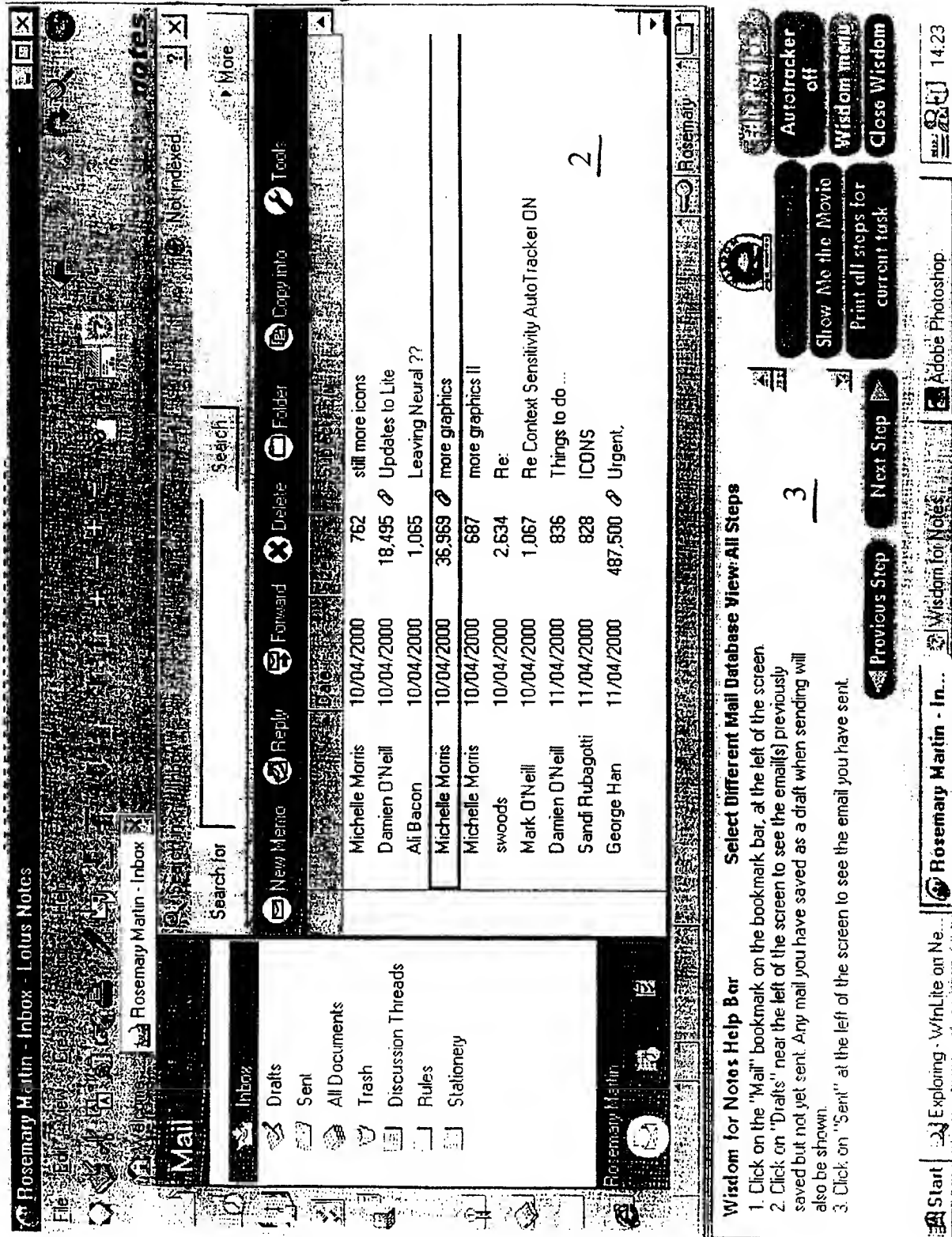
FIG. 3(a)

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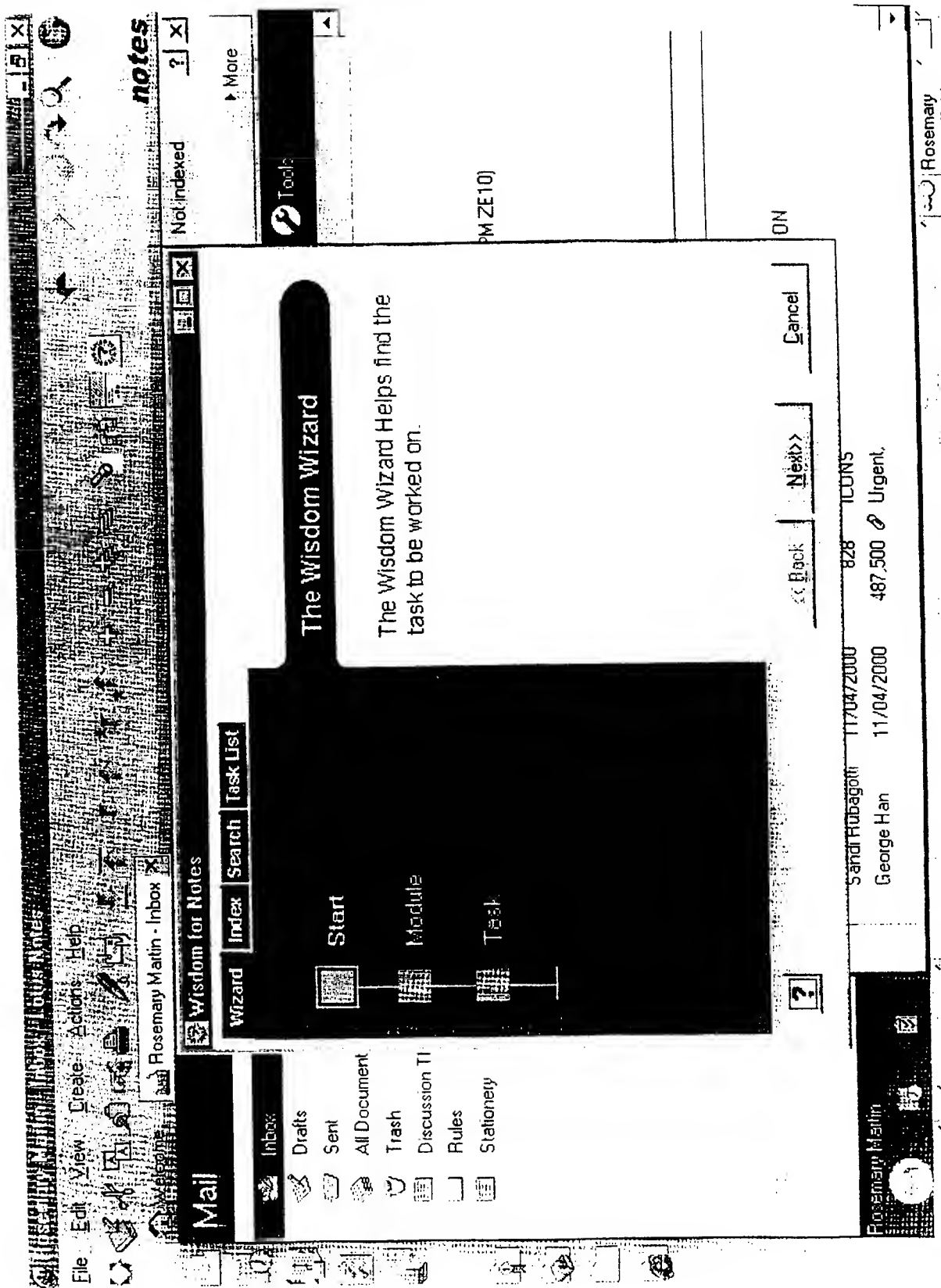
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FIG. 3(b)



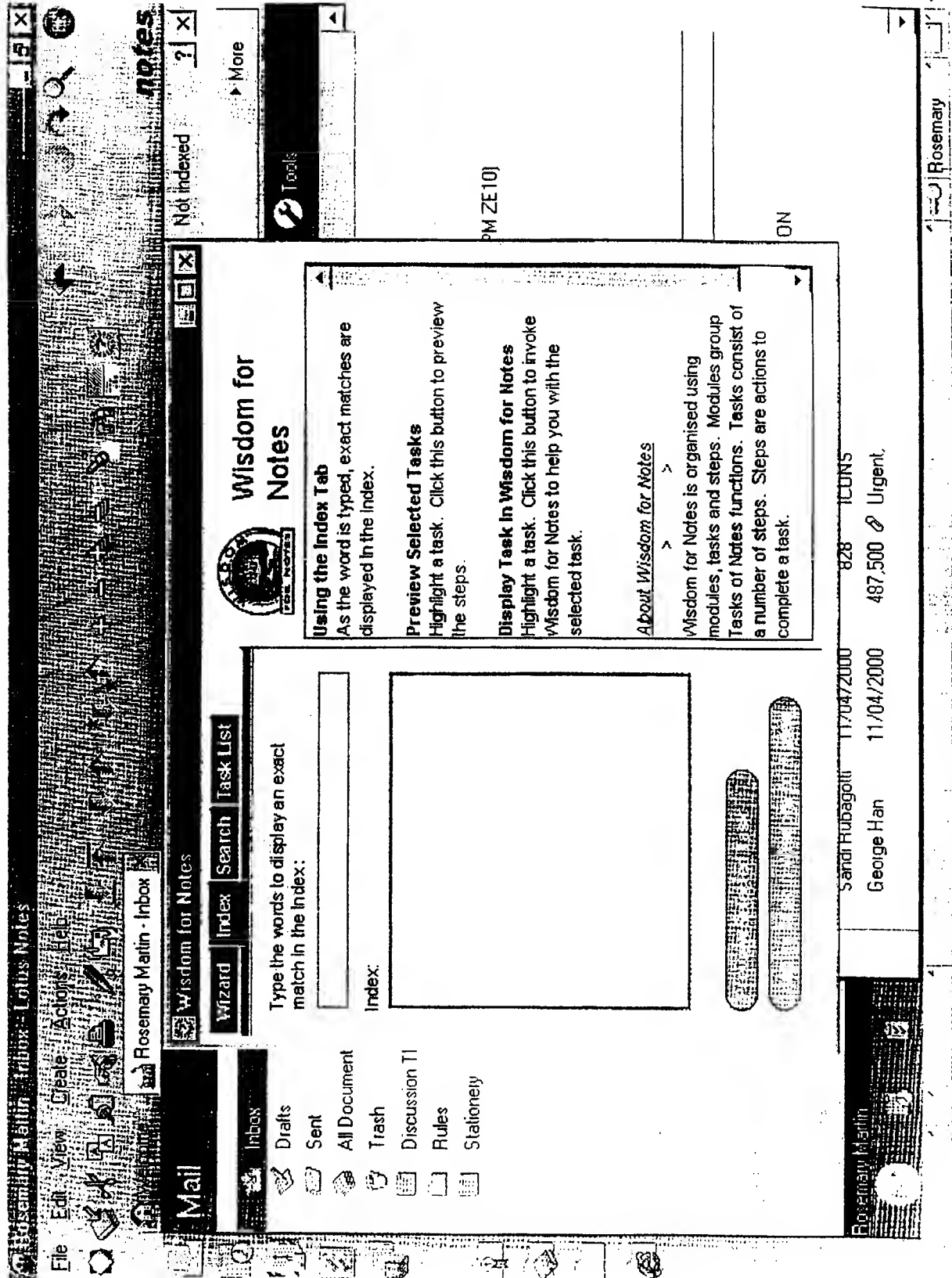
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FIG 4(a)



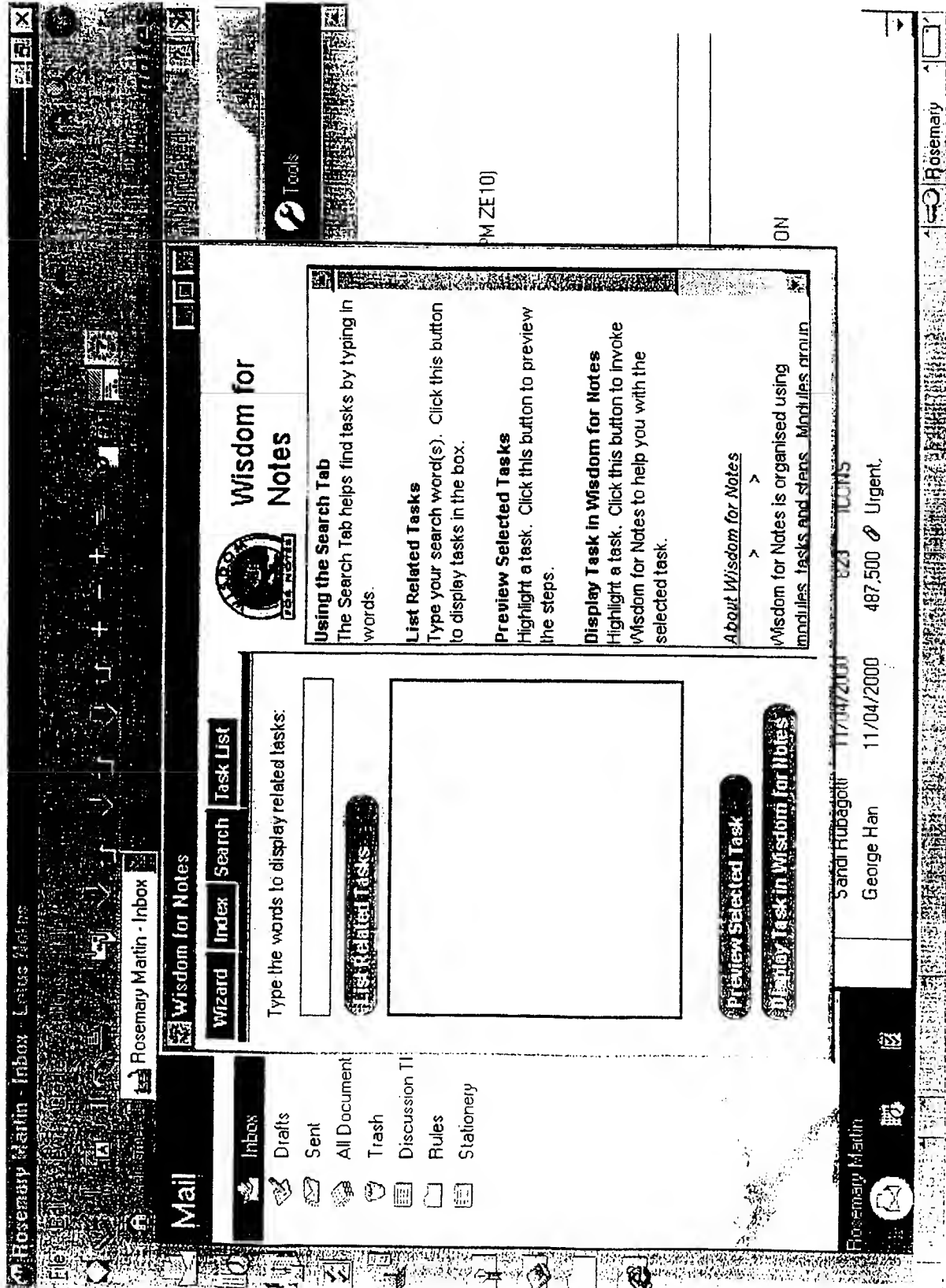
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FIG. 4(b)



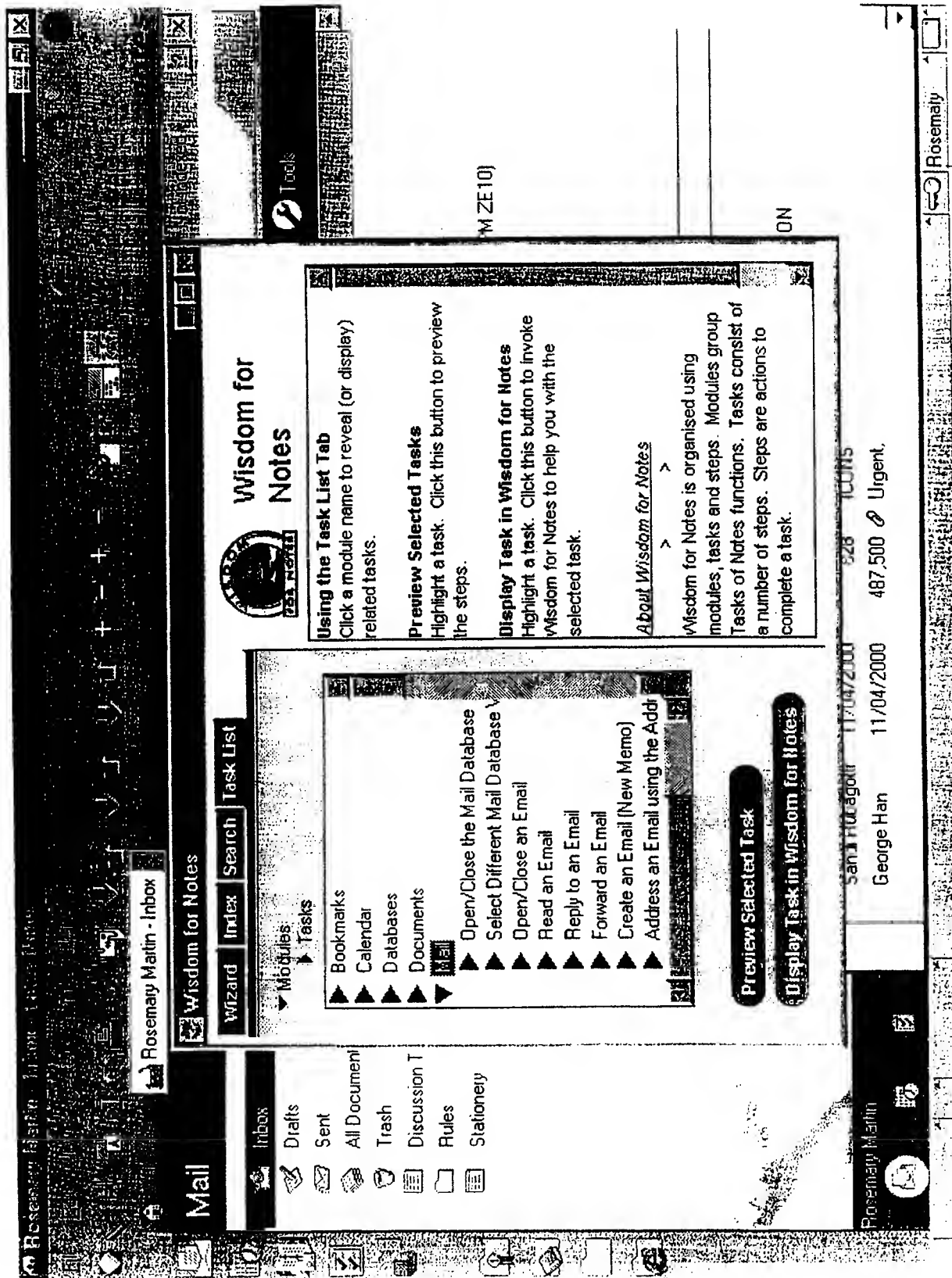
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FIG. 4(c)



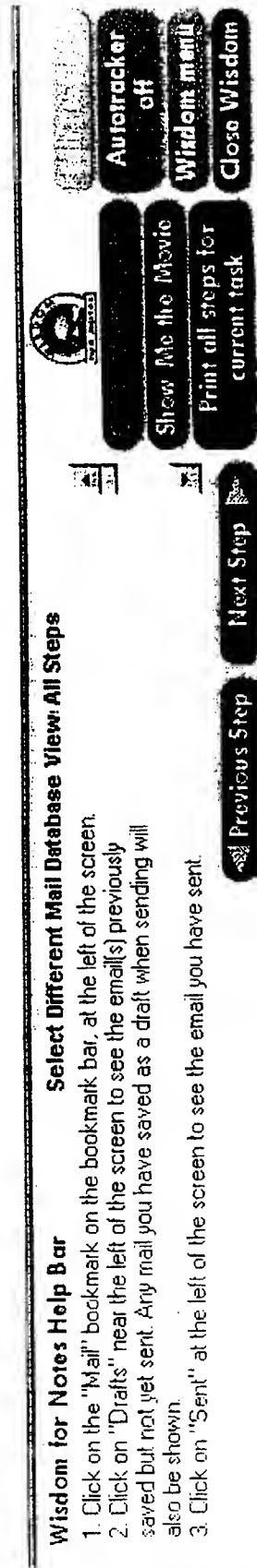
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FIG. 4(d)



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FIG. 5



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No
PCT/AU00/00214

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

Int. Cl. G06F 3/00

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC: G06F

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)
USPTO: icl/G06F AND (abst/help OR abst/resiz\$) AND abst/window\$

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
P.Y	US-A-6008809 (BROOKS) 28 December 1999 See whole document.	1 to 18
X	US-A-5825356 (HABIB et al.) 20 October 1998 See column 3 line 54 to column 4 line 3 and figure 4	1 to 18
Y	US-A-5754176 (CRAWFORD) 19 May 1998 See whole document.	1 to 18

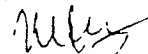
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Name and mailing address of the ISA/AU
AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE
PO BOX 200, WODEN ACT 2606, AUSTRALIA
E-mail address: pct@ipaustria.gov.au
Facsimile No. (02) 6285 3929

Authorized officer

MICHAEL HARDY
Telephone No. (02) 6283 2547

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

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C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US-A-5715415 (DAZEY et al.) 3 February 1998 See column 5 lines 27 to 37	1 to 18
Y	EP-A1-0820002 (INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MACHINES CORPORATION) 21 January 1998 See whole document.	1 to 18
P.A	US-A-5933140 (STRAHORN et al.) 3 August 1999 See abstract.	

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT
Information on patent family members

International application No.
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Patent Document Cited in Search Report			Patent Family Member		
US	6008809	JP	11110099		
US	5825356	AU	22153/97	WO	9735253
US	5754176	NIL			
US	5715415	NIL			
EP	820002	US	5920315		
US	5933140	NIL			
					END OF ANNEX